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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0093

INFO RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE

RUCNISL/ISLAMIC COLLECTIVE

RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 0340

RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 3488

RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 3508

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RUEHCI/AMCONSUL CALCUTTA 1694

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NEW DELHI 001162

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/14/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KNNP](#) [KISL](#) [IN](#) [IR](#)

SUBJECT: BJP OBEYS HINDU RIGHT IN OPPOSING IRANIAN BOMB

REF: NEW DELHI 948

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Classified By: PolCouns Geoff Pyatt for reasons 1.4 (B,D)

1. (C) Summary: Following a week of halfhearted denunciations of the UPA government for "selling out" to the United States by voting at the IAEA to report Iran's nuclear program to the UN Security Council, the opposition BJP Parliamentary Party executive committee concluded on February 14 that it was "not in national interests to have another nuclear weapon power in the neighborhood." The BJP position crystallized one day after the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the BJP's right-wing Hindu ideological backer, supported the GOI's decision to vote against Iran. While the BJP support gives the GOI some breathing room, the UPA still faces Left criticism, and may dispatch Minister of State E. Ahamed to Tehran on February 21-22 to buy some political space with the UPA's Muslim constituency. This about-face proves that the BJP is totally under the sway of the RSS, which views any Muslim bomb dimly. End Summary.

RSS POINTS THE WAY

2. (SBU) The BJP Parliamentary resolution issued February 14 affirmed the party's opposition to another nuclear state in India's neighborhood, and stated that Iran was in "clear violation of its obligations and commitments under the Non-Proliferation Treaty." The resolution stated "it is patently in India's interest to have been in the forefront of that vast majority of the international community" questioning Iran's nuclear program and, in particular,

proliferation from Pakistan. BJP leader Jaswant Singh, briefing the resolution to reporters, echoed nearly word for word the statement of RSS spokesman Ram Madhav, who told reporters on February 13 that "it is not in India's interest to have more nuclear powers in our vicinity."

CAUSING AN ABRUPT BJP REVERSAL

13. (C) The BJP's moment of RSS-fueled clarity follows days of dithering on whether it supported the GOI's vote or opposed it. BJP President Rajnath Singh had initially criticized the vote, saying on February 9 that India's stance was "unfair," given Iran's history of "always supporting India, even when Pakistan raised the Kashmir issue at the OIC." Singh hinted at the same time that the BJP would consider supporting the Samajwadi Party's (SP) proposed parliamentary no-confidence motion over the Iran issue, adding to the chorus of denunciation from left, right, and opportunistic center following the UPA government's February 4 vote. Prior to the BJP's Parliamentary Party meeting to consider the no-confidence proposal, however, the RSS (the right-wing Hindu ideological supporter of the BJP) had concluded that any action against Muslim Iran was fine in its books, and the BJP quickly fell in line. Both the BJP and RSS threw off a parting shot at the Government, complaining that the "manner" in which India voted gave the impression that the US was dictating policy to India, and Satish Chandra, D/NSA under the NDA government, piled on the criticism of the government in a February 14 opinion piece claiming that the vote was bad for India because it demonstrated the GOI's "spinelessness" under US pressure.

DAMAGE CONTROL WITH IRAN

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14. (SBU) Hindi-language daily Dainik Bhaskar reported on February 15 that Minister of State for External Affairs E. Ahamed would visit Iran on February 20-22, providing an opportunity for the GOI to try to patch up the cracks that have appeared in its relations with Tehran. Ahamed is a low profile Muslim Minister from Kerala who has focused almost solely on India's relations with the Gulf region. MEA confirmed that Ahamed would be in Tehran on those dates to attend the previously-scheduled ministerial-level meetings of the Indian Ocean Rim countries, but the Iran desk claimed no knowledge of any bilateral agenda for Ahamed's visit.

COMMENT: STILL A TOUGH SLOG FOR THE GOI

15. (C) Although the BJP continues to demand that the UPA "clarify" whether the US had arm-twisted India into the vote, its admission that it too supports the IAEA vote takes the sting out of its criticism, and ironically leaves the UPA's erstwhile allies -- the Left Parties and their opportunistic partners like the SP -- as the principal opponents of the Iran vote. The BJP's abrupt about-face also confirms the RSS's "remote control" over the party. The statement helps lower the temperature on this issue for the Prime Minister, who, although publicly unruffled by the harping, faces growing dissent within his party over the Iran nuclear issue, the US-India civil nuclear agreement, and even win-win proposals like security cooperation in the Straits of Malacca and the Indian Ocean.

16. (U) Visit New Delhi's Classified Website:
(<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/sa/newdelhi/>)
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